

New Report Demonstrates Iran's Continued Threat

As you may have heard in the news, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence recently released an unclassified portion of a National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) regarding [Iran's nuclear program](#)

. As noted at the beginning of the report, NIEs "are the intelligence community's most authoritative written judgments on national security issues..., and make judgments about the likely course of future events and identify the implications for U.S. policy." Because intelligence gathering is always extremely difficult, NIEs do not always prove to be one hundred percent accurate, nor do their authors necessarily agree on each point. Nonetheless, they do reflect the consensus of our intelligence community and help inform policymakers about challenging foreign policy issues.

The Iran report indicated "with high confidence" that Iran halted their nuclear weapons program in the fall of 2003. With that said, the intelligence community also assesses "with moderate-to-high confidence that Tehran (Iran's capital) at a minimum is keeping open the option to develop nuclear weapons." The report indicates that Iran's apparent decision to suspend their nuclear weapons program was "primarily in response to increasing international scrutiny and pressure resulting from exposure of Iran's previously undeclared work." It's difficult to determine the specific motives for Iran's decision. United Nations sanctions had not yet been imposed, and diplomatic pressure from European allies was in its early stages. With that noted, one major event in 2003 that may have influenced their decision was the removal of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq.

While the apparent suspension of Iran's nuclear weapons program is welcomed news, the NIE confirmed that the theoretic regime and radical president in Iran continue to pose a serious threat to U.S. and regional security. The report indicated that Iran embarked on a "considerable effort" to develop nuclear weapons from the late 1980s to 2003. Far from a novice at developing nuclear weapons, the NIE assesses "with high confidence that Iran has the scientific, technical, and industrial capacity to produce nuclear weapons if it decided to do so." It also indicates that Iran made "significant progress in 2007" in enriching uranium in centrifuges, a capability that "could be applied to producing nuclear weapons." Considering their growing capabilities, the NIE concludes that Iran could develop a nuclear weapon sometime between 2009 and 2015, if their nuclear weapons program was resumed.

Meanwhile, others in the international community reportedly believe that Iran may have already resumed their nuclear weapons program. This only strengthens the argument that strong international pressure against the dangerous Iranian regime must continue. For this reason, I strongly support our nation's current efforts with Britain, Germany, and France to develop potent

multilateral sanctions aimed at limiting Iran's ability to enhance their nuclear capabilities. It is my deepest hope that economic and diplomatic actions cause Iran to truly terminate their nuclear program without delay and for good. At the same time, I continue to believe that every option for dealing with this serious threat needs to be on the table.